

LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

VAROON BAKSHI

The English and Foreign Languages University, Lucknow Campus, Lucknow, India

ABSTRACT

Language policy is an academic discipline, which is considered to be a part of sociolinguistics. There is a history to this discipline and this history will be briefly explored in this paper. The creation of this discipline can be attributed to various governments all over the world. Thus the reasons behind the involvement of various governments in the creation of this discipline will also be explored. Moreover the spread of European imperialism in Asia and Africa coincided with the emergence of this discipline. Therefore language policy and planning was also introduced in various colonised nations. This led to the glorification of the language of colonisers and suppression of the language of the colonised. The paper will explore all the aforementioned areas of concern

KEYWORDS: Planning, Standardisation, Monolingualism, Decolonisation, Multilingualism, Dialects, Vernaculars, Imperialism

INTRODUCTION

Language policy is an academic area of study which is considered to be a part of sociolinguistics. Language policy is considered to be a 20th century phenomenon by many scholars and linguists. To a certain extent this hypothesis is true, however, it would be perilous for a scholar or linguist to ignore the endeavours for framing a national language policy undertaken by France, Slovak/Czech/Norwegian/Finnish national movements, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 16th, 19th and early 20th century respectively. Thus there is a vast history to this sub-discipline, which will be explored in this paper. The history of this sub-discipline clearly suggests that its pursuit has been of great importance for governments of nation states. Language policy like any other policy (social, economic and political) is created and implemented by the government. Thus the question arises- 'what is so important and necessary about language policy that government has to intervene to create and implement it?' The answer to this question will be explored in this paper. Furthermore, the birth of language policy in Europe coincided with the spread of European imperialism in Asia and Africa. Thus the concept of language policy spread overseas to the colonies. An imperialist language policy was enforced in these Asian and African colonies which led to the glorification of the language of the colonizer and stigmatization of the language of the colonized native. The history, ideology and philosophy behind this process of establishing the hegemony of a foreign language through a skewed language policy has been explored in this essay. The hegemony of one language inadvertently leads to the downfall of another language.

In colonial nations, the hegemony established by the colonialists' language led to the decline of the indigenous languages of the colonized natives. However after gaining independence, these erstwhile colonies, now independent nation states have established robust national language policies. Thus to sum up, the aim of this paper is to explain the historical process which led to the growth of language planning and policy formulation, the spread of this concept abroad to colonized nations, the role played by the colonizer in devising a language policy under which the coloniser's language

established a hegemony upon the linguistic culture of the colonized natives and the adversities the native's language had to face at the hands of the colonizer due to a skewed language policy.

Each nation state needs a common language to hold it together. The ideology of nationalism certainly requires a monolingual nation. However with the emergence of globalization, migration and transnationalism; the concept of a monolingual nation is becoming extinct. The linguistic rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities are being recognized and therefore multilingualism, like multiculturalism is being recognized as an integral part of a nation. However multilingualism needs to be managed in a proper manner so that the linguistic rights of a diverse range of population are protected. Thus the proper management of a large number of languages requires a policy or to be specific a language policy according to which rules are formulated for managing a plethora of languages in a multilingual setup. A robust language policy can only be achieved if a proper planning process has been adopted by the state. Language planning is the process through which a state gets the end product- language policy. Language policy is not only meant for multilingual countries, it is equally important for monolingual countries also. Monolingual countries, especially those which were colonized and whose language was suppressed by the colonizing nation generally leads to the "under-development" of the native language. The under-development of the native language essentially means that the language has not kept pace with the developments in the world; the lexicon of the language is woefully short of words especially those which denote modern scientific, economic and political concepts inventions and discoveries. Thus it becomes difficult to use the language in a modern set-up. The response of the nation to this problem is either to adopt a foreign/coloniser's language, which does not have the shortcomings of the native language, as the standard language or to initiate a process of language planning in order to create a policy for rectifying the problems of the native language. Thus the process of language planning gives birth to a language policy. Language policy is basically an officially mandated set of rules for language use and form within a nation state. These set of rules for the use of the language are established by the government of the concerned nation state. By doing so, a government is able to allot a function to a language/s. Therefore the official language is accorded the function of being used in official government communication and discourse. Similarly an official language policy also leads to the standardization of the writing system of a language and its grammar. Development of new terminology in the concerned language for scientific, technological and commercial purposes is also an offshoot of language policy and planning.

The genesis of "Language Policy and Planning" lies in the post Second World War period. However it would be wrong to say that this concept did not exist before the aforementioned period. The concept of a national language policy emerged in the 17th century. In this paper we will analyse four examples of formulation and implementation of a language policy from various historical periods. The four historical periods are French academic movement, European national movements, Soviet Union of 1920s and 1930s and the Czechoslovakia and Prague Linguistic School. The aforementioned periods during which language policy was implemented have been termed by Neustupny as Premodern, Early Modern, Modern and Postmodern (Neustupny 2006: 2209-2223).

In the 17th century language planning and formulation of a language policy was initiated by the Academie Francaise or the French Academy in France. This was the Pre modern stage of language policy and planning. The use of various local varieties of French by French elites in domains which were previously reserved for Latin led to the emergence of a process of language planning. It was felt that the popularity of various French dialects amongst the people of France was a positive indication towards the growing unity in the country. Thus in order to strengthen the unity and

order of the French nation, it was necessary to bring unity and order in the language spoken by its people. This could only be achieved by expounding explicit grammatical rules to the language, these rules would act as guidelines to the “correct” usage of the language, which would in turn render it capable to be used in domains which require the use of a cohesive language, like science, art, technology etc.

Language planning also emerged from the various European national movements of the nineteenth century. Most of these movements were aimed at achieving independence for ethnic and linguistic minority groups from large heterogeneous nation states which were dominated by a ethnic and linguistic majority group; example- Austro-Hungarian empire. These movements not only had political, economic and social demands but they also had linguistic demands. However participation of the masses in this movement centered around political and social activities whereas cultural activities which included the creation of a new linguistic repertoire for a new nation, were supported by a few intellectuals. This could be the reason why European national movements achieved a lot in the socio-politico-economic field but not much in the field of linguistics. The people of Finland were successful in achieving a separate nation for themselves but the Finnish language could not become a force of integration for the newly formed nation, for a long time. However the linguistic concerns of the European national movements were different from the French Academy. Newly formed nation states have different linguistic aims and approaches. One of the aims of newly formed nation states and the movements which brought them into existence is to select varieties of the language which can be standardised. Standardisation of language is important because it has to be used in important domains like government communication, scientific writing, art etc. Moreover old languages which have fallen into disuse due to the hegemony established by the language of the majority groups ruling the nation have to be brought to the forefront in order to construct a new language for a new nation. Thus the Czechs designated Old Czech dialects and Slavic languages as sources of new words in order to do away with the hegemony of the German language and culture (Jernudd and Nekvapil 2012: 19-20).

The period from 1920s-1930s saw the rise of the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution. This period also saw the emergence of language planning in the Soviet Union. The Bolshevik Revolution had led to the overthrow of the Czar and the establishment of the Soviet state. The newly established Soviet state also called Soviet Union had brought together more than 100 ethnic groups together into a single nation state. These diverse ethnic groups also spoke varied languages and therefore it was necessary to have a standard language in order to have linguistic unity in a newly formed large nation state. However there were certain hurdles initially in the popularization of Russian as a national language. Czarist Russia had enforced the Russian language on various linguistically and ethnically different people. Thus the Bolshevik government under Lenin did not want to commit a similar mistake again. Therefore the Soviet state declared the “right of self-determination for ethnic groups including schooling based on their languages” (Jernudd and Nekvapil, 2012: 20-21). Thus Russian was rejected as the language on the basis of which a language planning initiative would be launched. The Soviet government concentrated on modernisation of several languages through vocabulary development, creation of new alphabets etc. According to Alpatov more than seventy alphabets were created for the languages of the Soviet Union during this period (Alpatov 2000: 222) Moreover the Soviet government also produced several textbooks and primers in order to educate people. However the Soviets also included various aspects of Marxism in their language planning process.

The Prague Linguistic School carried out language planning in Czechoslovakia in 1920s and 1930s. The Prague school of language planning ignored large macro level socio-linguistic problems and concentrated on micro level problems which involved modifying the details of the concerned language. Such a method of language planning is different from the

Soviet language planning model which placed a major emphasis on macro level issues which involved a large number of languages. However the Prague school's main aim was the expansion of Czech, which was already given the status of a standard language. Thus the varieties of the Czech language were ignored and emphasis was only placed on the Czech standard language- such a planning is considered a hallmark of modern language planning.

However, formally, language planning began at a large scale in the post-second world war period. During the post Second World War period Europe was being rebuilt with American aid under the Marshall Plan and new independent nation states were being carved out by the process of decolonisation. Thus the war ravaged European nations and the newly independent former colonies required developmental assistance from the USA. Therefore, massive rebuilding projects were set up especially in Europe. These projects required the support of scientists, economists, social scientists, including linguists. These specialists were required to solve several post Second World War problems which were not only social, political or economic but also linguistic in nature. Thus the linguistic problems of newly independent but war ravaged states had to be resolved by linguists through the process of "language planning". Moreover language planning would produce a language policy.

The aforementioned paragraphs describe the various language planning processes in various countries during various historical periods. However there have been instances when a nation has literally imposed its language policy on another nation without its concurrence. This only happens when a nation has colonized another nation and has imposed its imperialist policies on the colonized nation in order to fulfill its own ends. However before analyzing the process of language planning in a colonized nation, it would be pertinent to understand what imperialism and colonialism are. Colonisation basically involves a group of people settling in a different part of the world. Such a settlement is generally not welcomed by the natives of the land. European settlements in the American and Australia were called colonies (Philipson 2012: 203). However imperialism involves the establishment of military and political control by a dominant power over subordinate peoples and territories (Philipson 2012: 203). From the fifteenth century European countries like England, Portugal, France etc started establishing control over various non-European countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas. This led to the creation of European empires which were far away from Europe. In these empires the European colonial entities controlled the polity, economy and culture, which essentially meant that the use of language was also controlled by them

The main aim of the language planning process of the colonizer is to expand their language in the colonized nation, especially at the expense of the language of the native. There are many people belonging to the colonizing power, who play an important role in furthering their language policy. Religious missionaries, educationists and civil servants play important roles in implementing the language policy of the colonial state. These people created an illusion amongst the native that the colonial language was superior to the native's language. The colonial language, according to the ruling regime was more polite and civil than the native language. By doing so the colonisers wanted to create justification for the enforcement of the use of the colonial language in educational institutions, government offices etc. Thus the colonized natives had to learn the colonial language in order to improve their prospects of getting an education from a colonial university/college or school and for getting a job in the colonial government. Since the economy of the colonized nation is underdeveloped and the colonial government does not make an effort to develop it, there are few jobs available for the natives. Thus a job in the colonial government is seen as a good opportunity. However such a job requires knowledge of the colonial language. Therefore the natives were forced to learn the colonial language. At the same time the colonial

government also needed cheap manpower to run its huge establishment but the manpower had to be at least proficient in the colonial language. Moreover the colonized manpower which was educated in the use of the colonial language was treated as a 'tiny elite' group which was well accustomed with the culture of the colonial nation and therefore could be trusted by the colonial masters. Such a policy was followed by the French in the French Indo China where the colonial education policy was based on the use of French. The local languages were ignored by the colonial education policy. By doing so the French were able to create a local elite who due to their French education and the advantages that they derived from it in terms of jobs, were loyal to the colonial French government. The first director of Alliance Francaise stated, "it is necessary to attach the colonies to the metropole by a very solid psychological bond against the day when their progressive emancipation ends in the form of federation as is probable- that they be and remain French in language, thought and spirit" (Pierre Foncin cited in Rodney 1972: 285). Thus these are very important reasons for the colonial government to initiate a language planning process. However the hegemony established by the colonial language ultimately leads to the destruction of the native language, some scholars call this language genocide. According to Rannut, "Under the pressure of the imperial ideology they (colonialists) were forced to sacrifice linguistic rights for an ideal that was clearly an attempt at linguistic genocide" (Rannut 1994: 179). Similarly Calvet has devised a term called *glottophagie* or linguistic cannibalism; it basically denotes the dominant language eating up and extinguishing the dominated language an act which could easily termed as linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas cited in Philipson 2012: 206). Similarly aggressive language policy adopted by the English colonialists in Canada resulted in the 'genocide' of approximately sixty native languages in Canada. This is the reason why the United Nations genocide convention has defined language genocide and has accepted that it is still practiced widely in the modern world and is a crime against humanity.

Colonial language planning involves a creation of a language hierarchy. Maintenance of such a hierarchy involves a pattern of stigmatization of dominated languages as mere dialects, vernaculars and glorification of the dominant language, considering it a result of a superior culture (Philipson in Spolsky 2012: 206). Thus an imperialist power like Nazi Germany regarded the German language to be a language of progress, modernity and unity. Moreover a myth is also created according to which the dominant imperial/colonial language is considered to be 'logical' in nature whereas the language of the colonized is regarded to be devoid of such functions and qualities which are the hallmark of the 'logical' language. Thus the myth of the 'logical' language is used as a justification to compel the colonized people to use the 'superior' 'logical' language.

Having explained the nature of language policy and planning in colonized nations it would be pertinent to turn our attention to a former British colony, India. In India the British encountered a rich culture that had a strong ancient literary and linguistic tradition. Moreover India is a multilingual nation and therefore it was difficult for the British to impose a single language- English upon people belonging to different cultures, speaking a diverse range of languages, all within the same geographical territory of the nation. However the British were indeed successful in creating a small group of elites who were not only well accustomed with the use of the language but also had great affinity for the culture of Britain. But it would also be worthwhile to mention that even after many years of independence approximately 2.5 percent of Indians use English (Nandy 2006: 128). Thus this clearly shows that the British language policy was not successful in spreading the colonial language throughout India. Perhaps the less popularity of English in India as compared to the status and popularity of Spanish in several South American countries can be attributed to the cultural arrogance of the colonial British in India. Lord Macaulay had a firm belief in the liberty, progress and toleration of British culture and such a culture could be propagated in India through the use of English. Macaulay had a lot of pride in British culture's ascendancy in the world

which led to the emergence of the famous Macaulay's Minute on Education. Macaulay spewed his hatred for Indian culture and traditions in the Minute when he said, "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia (Macaulay cited in Grover 2009: 258). Moreover Macaulay expounded the superiority of the English language when he said, "Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nation of the earth have created and handed in the course of ninety generations" (Macaulay cited in Grover 2009: 258), and in the end Macaulay revealed his aim of spreading English in India, "to create a class of persons who should be Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in moral and in intellect. Lord Macaulay's words sum up the language policy followed by the British. The overall policy of the British was thus, to create natives whose minds would cease to be Indian, in order to fulfill this goal, the British used English as the instrument. However such a policy did lead to the division of the country into two segments- English speaking elite loyal to the British and the 'ignorant' masses that used vernacular languages and were antagonistic towards the British. At the same time it would also be pertinent to mention that unlike Canada and other European colonies which suffered from linguistic genocide, colonial India did not face this problem. The reason for this could be that the British developed vernacular languages as ancillary to the teaching of English; even Macaulay's Minute stated that vernacular languages would supplement the teaching of English in schools and colleges.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus language policy and planning is essentially a tool through the use of which nations want to achieve social and political stability and also economic prosperity. The lexical limitation and archaism of a language can also hamper the scientific, technological and economic growth of a nation. Thus proper language planning which in turn gives rise to a robust language policy can create a standard language which is up-to-date with the latest terminology and lexicon used in a modern technologically driven society. However language planning can also be used for fulfilling devious agendas. Language planning in colonial nations is generally aimed at eliminating the influence of the native language on the colonized people and in some cases eliminating the sheer existence of the language itself. The ultimate aim is to create hegemony of the language of the colonizer at the cost of the language of the colonized native. However language planning started as an endeavour for creating a standard language for a newly created nation as it can be seen in the various planning strategies and processes adopted by the European national movements, French academic movement, the Bolsheviks and the Prague Linguistic School. Thus language policy and planning has both positive and negative aspects, however in recent times it has been used for positive endeavours, for the achievement of cultural emancipation of newly independent or war ravaged nations, by creating their own standardized language.

REFERENCES

1. Alpatov, V.M. (2005). Language Situation in the Regions of Modern Russia. Retrieved from <http://www.philology.ru/linguistics1/alpatov-05.htm>.
2. K.J. Mattheier and Peter Trudgill. (eds). (2006). Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter
3. Alka Mehta and B.L. Grover. (2009). A New Look at Modern Indian History (From 1707 to the Modern Times). New Delhi: S. Chand
4. Nandy. (2006). Talking India. Ashish Nandy in Conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

5. Robert Philipson. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
6. Kangas Skutnabb and R. Philipson (eds). (1995). *Linguistic Human Rights: Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter
7. Bernard Spolsky. (2004). *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
8. Bernard Spolsky (eds). (2012). *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*. New York: Cambridge University Press

